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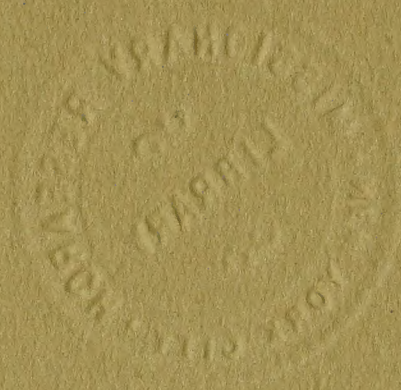
# Wanted - Authors

By

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## WANTED—AUTHORS

KENNETH J. SAUNDERS

Millions of people hungry for something to read! It seems strange to us who are wearied with too many newspapers and too many books; but it is true and tragic. It constitutes in fact one of the great challenges to the Church of Christ, and the following statement, fragmentary as it is, is an appeal to students to seize this great opportunity.

Think of the great annual convention of 30,000 Christians gathered under the palms of Travancore—all eager for something to read, and representing a Christian force sufficient in numbers to evangelize all India. How eagerly they listen to sound exposition of the Bible! How hungry they are for books such as commentaries and biography!

Or picture to yourself some great Buddhist festival; gaily dressed and happy people have come up to the splendid Pagoda from all parts of the country; men, women, and children are there worshipping at the shrines, all smoking contentedly the while, or interlarding periods of worship with "lucky dips," sideshows, and all the fun of the fair. But there are twenty-four hours in the day, and

the great multitude is hungry for something to read during the hot, still hours of the afternoon. These Burmans are the most literate of all the peoples of India.

The Buddhist Press is pouring out thousands of volumes of the sacred writings of Buddhism, and also unfortunately thousands of copies of less elevating literature; *in ten years its output in Burma increased a thousandfold*. Side by side with the stalls which sell Buddhist books are those of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which each year reaches a higher circulation. But folk want something besides Bibles and Buddhist scriptures! When the Christian Church puts out leaflets on public health, or the care of the home, or child-welfare, there is an eager and constant demand for them; when it puts out constructive religious teaching, there is a considerable demand; occasionally when it puts out provocative and irritating attacks, a thrill of indignation goes through the great crowd, and I have seen one very promising mission wrecked because of one such leaflet. Opposite to the Temple of the Tooth Relic at Kandy, by the great Library of Buddhist Scriptures, we had erected a huge screen and on it we were throwing pictures, the best obtainable, of the Life of Christ; the people were gathered round, eager and reverent, and nearby our book-stall was doing a

busy trade. Then unfortunately one of the old type of tracts began to circulate, accusing the people of idolatry and the monks of knavery; the tooth-relic of Buddha, it argued, was a sham and the people were deluded. The patient, courteous, lovable crowd became restive, and stones were thrown; and we went home, saddened that after a hundred years there are still people who are such goats as to believe that you make a man your friend by hitting him below the belt; or that you can introduce him to your Master by such methods!

What is wanted, then, is sympathetic, constructive and positive literature. Missionary scholars have done incalculable service in reducing countless languages to writing and in making dictionaries and vernacular Bibles: the present hunger for other books is largely due to them. There is still much of this pioneer work to be done, especially in Africa, and for millions in other lands, both Christian and non-Christian. But the Church must get busy with the second stage of this great task—the production of books on all kinds of subjects, positive and constructive.

Books of this kind have opened many doors in India during these recent years. Ruling Princes have learned from them that Christianity is there not to break down but to build up, not to destroy

but to fulfil, and today are offering sites for Christian buildings, and asking for Christian teachers of physical education and of scout-lore, and of other constructive things. Christ is coming to give abundant life,—to fulfil rather than to destroy!

Good literature also helps to make friendships with the highly cultured leaders of Indian thought, who are themselves producing such exquisite works of art as *Gitanjali*, and who have all down the ages produced great plays like *Sakuntala* or *Haris chandra*. Read the works of our great Indian poet, Tagore, and you will see how fascinating are the opportunities for a man who loves poetry and who has gifts of writing; you will realize that India has a great spiritual gift to make to the world; and that we may help her to make it and to have it worthily received. Absorbing but up-hill work! And especially so as the task of the missionary author is now primarily to raise up men of the Christian Church in each land to write their own literature—novels, storybooks for the children, biography for the adolescents, commentaries for the preachers and teachers! Think of the task as it appears today among the boys of India; a nation of three hundred and twenty million people passionately asking to be trained for self-government; a new unity as its peoples are being welded into one; an urgent demand on all sides for education;

Government pledged to hand back the country to its people and asking the co-operation of all men of good-will in its colossal task. What a part the right books may play in this great drama! What a tragic waste may be the outcome of the wrong ones! For the best youth of India is passionately romantic and as easily misled into wrong paths as guided into right ones.

Or think of China with her leading men crying out for more Christian manhood amongst their people, with a burning indignation against the parcelling out of her territory and a passionate desire to understand the modern world with its strange mingling of a bad old heritage and a new dawn of hope. Popular lecturers in science and public health are creating a great demand for books which are constructive and scientific; and China's students want to feel China's masses solid with them in new ideals and action. A Chinese friend tells me that what they want most are books on the Social Teachings of Jesus, and books which will kindle and inform a noble patriotism. What might be accomplished by a Christian author with the literary gifts of Liang Chi Chao, China's most popular writer?

Realize what good books have meant to students in the West, and then think of China's great

student body eager for books in their mother tongue,—both original productions and translations of the best in Western literature.

Or think of the patient loyal-hearted peoples of Africa—bewildered and saddened by a century of exploitation—and yet turning wistful eyes to the Christ of the white man! They have been taught to read and write and they are hungry for the right kind of books and booklets. What might the story of Mr. Booker Washington not mean to countless lives if they could read it in their own vernaculars, racy and idiomatic?

Here is a task which all missionary leaders are agreed must be resolutely faced; which all will agree is as formidable as it is urgent. What is needed?

(a) *A united and enlightened plan of campaign.* Have we got one?

(b) *The money to finance such things as daily and weekly newspapers.* Is it not significant that Theosophy has two daily newspapers in Madras while the Christian Church cannot boast one in the whole of India?

(c) *Men of faith and vision coupled with gifts of authorship, who will at once produce books themselves and stimulate others to write; to write not*



*only in English, but especially in the vernaculars, that the masses may have their hunger satisfied. They cry for bread; shall we give them a stone? Or shall we turn away in haughty disdain like the ill-fated Marie Antoinette and say, "They have no bread; let them eat cake!" That is to ask for trouble!*





